MAW
Pa 1794.72

The following Letters having paſſed between the Perſons mentioned therein, they are now publiſhed, in order to ſhew the real Nature of the Diſpute which occaſioned them, and to promote Peace and brotherly Love.

MANCHESTER, MAY 28, 1795.

To the whole Methodist Society in Bristol, and especially to the Itinerant and Local Preachers, Leaders, Stewards and Trustees.

Very dear Brethren,

YOU have (more than once) expected to have ſeen us in Briſtol, but have been hitherto diſappointed; and it is likely we ſhall not now be able to pay you a viſit till after the next Conference.

IT would take up too much time, to give you a particular account of thoſe things which have prevented us from fulfilling the deſign we had at different times formed, (with a ſingle eye to the glory of GOD) of ſeeing you in Briſtol. Perhaps we may ſay with the Apoſtle, We would have come once and again, but Satan hindered: Be it ſo; yet we believe, that our infinitely wiſe and gracious GOD, will finally diſappoint him of his hope in this buſineſs.

WE have formerly laboured among you with great comfort to ourſelves, and we truſt with ſome degree of profit to you; and have that ſincere and cordial affection for you all, that would be ſufficient to induce us to take a journey to Briſtol, in order to do every thing in our power for your mutual peace and happineſs. Our difference in judgment reſpecting ſome uneſſential things, which things alſo have been the unhappy occaſion of that breach which has happened among you, does not at all leſſen our regard for either party. No, Brethren, we can aſſure you, that you are equally dear to us, and as it has given us inexpreſſible pain, that there ſhould be a breach in one of the oldeſt and largeſt Societies in our Connection, ſo we moſt devoutly wiſh, that this breach may be ſo effectually healed, that you may be as the heart of one man, and the work of the Lord proſper more abundantly than ever among you.

IN order to this, will you permit us to do that (although abſent) which we would have done, had we come to Briſtol, viz. We entreat you in the name of the Lord Jeſus Chriſt, to be reconciled to each other, and by that means diſappoint Satan, and every one elſe who would ſay, "There, there, ſo would we have it."

TO effect this, we would adviſe,

1. That a day may be ſet apart for ſolemn faſting and prayer, by the whole body of Methodiſts in Briſtol, in which we and all our friends will heartily join you, upon your giving us proper notice of the time, ſo will we unitedly call upon the name of the Lord in your behalf, that he may reſtore peace among you.

2. LET both ſides endeavour to forget who were the firſt or greateſt aggreſſors, or what were the real or imaginary injuries done by the one to the other.

3. LET both ſides be determined to forgive, and be ambitious who ſhall be the firſt in this God-like buſineſs.

4. WE entreat you, one and all, to conſider as in the preſence of God, what the ſad effects are likely to be of your remaining as you now are; not merely with reſpect to yourſelves, but alſo with reſpect to the whole connection. How inconceivably dreadful would it be, if your diſcord ſhould be the means of dividing the whole Methodiſt body! Some of the effects of ſuch a diviſion are ſet forth in a letter, dated Briſtol, May 15, and ſigned A. M. W. T. J. B. But many and great as thoſe expreſſed in that letter are, yet we think they are but few and ſmall, to what would attend a general diviſion of the whole body. And ſhall you (dear Brethren, whoſe praiſe has long been in all our Societies) be the dire cauſe of ſo inexpreſſibly fatal an effect! God forbid. We are ſatisfied that none of you would wiſh to be anſwerable for the everlaſting ruin of precious ſouls! Therefore we entreat you by the tender mercies of God to conſider,

5. What each of you can give up to the other, in order that the ineſtimable bleſſing of peace may be reſtored, and to prevent a general diviſion of our Brethren! which we are ſure you cannot think of but with bleeding hearts. Whatever you do in this reſpect, do it as unto the Lord. You well know how much each of you ought to ſacrifice (where conſcience is not immediately concerned) for each others peace and happineſs. Aſſured of this, we will add no more entreaties. Only being thus perſuaded, we adviſe that a ſelect number on both ſides may be appointed by the whole body to meet together, and in the fear and in the love of God, to take council together, ſo as to bring about the wiſhed for end.

As the above are the ſteps we ſhould have taken had we come to Briſtol, ſo now we moſt cordially recommend them to be taken by both ſides, in order to reſtore peace, and we doubt not but you will believe us when we ſay, that

We remain,

Your moſt affectionate Brethren and Servants for Chriſt's ſake,

ALEXANDER MATHER,
JOHN PAWSON.

To Mess. MATHER and PAWSON.

BRISTOL, JUNE 2, 1795.

Dear and honoured Brethren,

WE thank you for your truly Chriſtian addreſs. We have lamented, and do ſtill lament the diviſion which has taken place in the Society of Briſtol. We cannot ſee that there was any need of this, or upon what ground thoſe who made it can juſtify themſelves before *the great Shepherd and Bishop of* all *our souls*. The members of the Methodiſt Society in this City, never were of one mind reſpecting outward things; nor was there any need that they ſhould. Our bond of union never was any thing of this nature: it was *holiness*. No yoke, but that of our *one Master, Christ*, was ever laid upon any of the members at their admiſſion: nor was there any place in the kingdom, where Brethren might more peaceably "agree to diſagree." A ſmall chapel in the ſuburbs afforded an aſylum, and was a means of unſpeakable comfort, to thoſe who ſcrupled or diſliked attending the National Church. In that place they interfered with no other worſhippers, and all who differed from them in judgment, were freely permitted to abound in their own opinion. But this Chriſtian plan of mutual forbearance and love, ſo continually recommended in the oracles of God, was denied to us, and we were caſt out for claiming it, as though we were unworthy of the Chriſtian name.

YOU adviſe that we ſhould humble ourſelves before the Lord, with faſting and prayer, and be reconciled again to each other. This we are very willing to do. The chapel which the Lord has given us will be ſoon ready to open. We kept a day of faſting and prayer previous to its being begun, and we intend to do the ſame previous to its being opened. We invite our Brethren on the other ſide to join with us herein; and if they deſire a more intimate union, even that which was ſo ſtrangely broken, we ſhall receive them with open arms. All that is paſt ſhall be forgotten, and no reſtraint of any kind, except what the Lord himſelf has laid, ſhall ever be impoſed upon any one of them, no more than upon any of us. This offer we make in the name of *the Prince of Peace, who bought us with his blood*. If it be accepted, we ſhall rejoice. If not, it will be our witneſs *in that day when we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ*.

We remain,

(In behalf of the Truſtees, Leaders, Stewards, local Preachers, and People,)

Your very affectionate Brethren,

H. MOORE,
T. RUTHERFORD,
J. CROWTHER,
J. GRANT.

P. S. The Chapel will be opened, the Lord permitting, the 28th of this Month, and the faſt day will be the Friday before.